



(U//FOUO) Generally Speaking: Back from the Front

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(U//FOUO) I just got back from a short visit to Iraq and, I can tell you, no matter how often we say it, "there is nothing like being there." Before going over, I thought I knew the contributions made by SIGINT'ers to this effort. But, walking in their shoes and watching the work they do, under harsh conditions, I now truly understand that the SIGINT'ers deployed to Iraq are heroes. Total professionals...every one of them!

(S//SI) I visited what could be called the SCS (Special Collection Service) site in Baghdad. First of all, the breadth of knowledge held by these individuals is nothing short of amazing. I was very impressed with the complex, high tech site that was set up in such a short time. The civilians that operate this site are exposed to all the risks that come with living in a war zone but these folks are not deterred.

(S//SI) We had a chance to see a site run by the 1st Armored Division, 501st MI Charlie Company. Let me tell you, the OSHA people (Occupational Safety and Health Agency) would not be too keen on the way these folks get to their place of business. The site is on top of one of Saddam's bombed out palaces. A stairway that leads to the roof has been altered by U.S. ordnance and there is a huge gap between the stair treads and any surrounding wall. One false step and you're in trouble!

(U//FOUO) The CSG (Cryptologic Service Group) and the remarkable TAREX (Target Exploitation) Team are all well known by the fighting forces. It was heartwarming to see that these and all of the SIGINT'ers in country are well accepted by the combat arms people. I can guarantee that this experience is something none of them will ever forget. It will change their lives and influence every SIGINT decision they make from now on.

(U//FOUO) I learned many things on this trip. Among the most important is that getting good intel is best accomplished with conversation - a two-way dialogue. The folks on the ground know a lot of things that can make our jobs easier and more effective. We are going to have to find a way to take advantage of what they know instead of relying only on what they want.

(U) Another encouraging thing I learned is that the closer you get to the street, the better things look. The general support from the Iraqi people is reason for optimism. Along with that optimism we must remember that we have a responsibility to do our very best at our jobs, each day...every day. Knowing what I know about your professionalism, I have no doubt you will.

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